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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

FRIDAY, July 18, 1941

SUBJECT: "NEW WORK CLOTHES FOR WOMEN." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

If you are one of those women who really likes to get down to brass tacks and do good, hard manual labor--I have some fashion news today that may interest you. I have some information about a group of new designs for clothes--clothes designed especially for working women.

These new work clothes have been designed by the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Some of them are for women who do farm chores. Some of them are for women who work in factories. Still others are for homemakers in the city and the country who do such work as washing windows--or putting out a big family wash every week.

Miss Clarice Scott of the Bureau of Home Economics clothing staff is the woman responsible for these new work clothes. Here's what she says about them.

"For years," she points out, "the woman who does hard, active work has been the forgotten woman of the fashion page. There has been plenty of attention given to work clothes for the 'White collar' girl. But no one ever designed an outfit for doing such things as milking or working in a factory. Women who did work such as this have been forced to wear what they could buy--usually housedresses, men's coveralls, or men's overalls. Naturally, none of these exactly suit their purpose--because they are designed for men and for the kind of work men do."

So Miss Scott and her fellow workers set about to do something to improve the situation.

They started from the beginning. First they studied a particular type of job--then they worked out a sensible outfit for that job. If the job called for



stooping and reaching--then stooping room and reaching room were built right into the work outfit. If the job was done around dangerous machinery--then Miss Scott worked for "safety first" in the outfit. For example, she put pockets so they wouldn't catch on things and made the outfit with no loose sashes or ties.

But Miss Scott didn't stop there. She saw to it that every one of her work outfits was comfortable to wear. She saw to it that they all were built on sound clothing construction lines. That is, the garment was simple to make and not wasteful to cut out of material the width that it ordinarily comes on the bolt in the stores.

Furthermore, she designed each outfit with wash day in mind. That is, she designed these clothes so they'd be easy to wash and to iron--and be easy to put on and take off.

And finally--but by no means least important--Miss Scott paid attention to that virtue of clothes that's near to every woman's heart. She made the work clothes attractive and becoming.

Now, I'd like to describe just briefly two or three of the outfits that Miss Scott has designed.

The first one she turned out was what she calls a coverette. This coverette is especially for farm women--to wear when doing the chores--or tending the chickens--or doing the family washing--or the gardening--or the milking.

This coverette is a coverall type of suit. That is, it is in one piece. There's a surplice closing in the front. This allows a person to step into it, to pull it up, and then to tie it on with the sash ends. For working in the garden or other jobs when there's much stooping to do--there are special snaps up around the ankles. These snaps keep the bottoms of the trouser legs from getting in the dirt when you kneel down--and it puts the fullness for stooping where it will do the most good.

As to material for this coverette, Miss Scott says cotton seersucker is one of the best. That's because seersucker is cool, and easy to wash. Then, it isn't necessary to wear many undergarments with a seersucker coverette. And that makes for coolness also, and cuts down on washings.

Another one of the new designs is a coverall apron. This is suitable both for farm and factory. It may be worn over a dress for protection. Or you can put it over a blouse and wear it for a sort of working uniform.

For women who do heavier work around the farm--Miss Scott has designed a sturdy field suit. I won't describe this all to you. But one of the special features are half sleeves that snap on and off. When they're snapped on, the sleeves protect the arms from sunburn and scratches. When they're unsnapped, the outfit has short sleeves--which are a lot easier to work in than rolled-up sleeves.

Still another outfit is a one-piece coverall with plenty of room for action--for women working in defense industries. Another is a complete shower-proof cotton outfit for wet weather. Another is a jumper slack suit. And still another is an easy-to-make utility apron.

And now--here's a question you may have in your mind about these new work outfits. "Where can I see some of them?"

And here's the answer. You'll probably be able to see them soon in pattern books and in the stores selling readymade outfits. For the Bureau of Home Economics has released the designs to the pattern companies and the clothing trade. And both the pattern makers and the makers of readymade garments have been very interested in them. It is expected that the designs will be adopted widely as women take over more and more jobs in the National Defense program.

